

April 5, 1984

LB 561

really a dollars and cents issue. It is a very important health care issue. Now it is wrong for us to provide this great expansion of powers to optometrists. Now a couple of years ago or three years ago, Senator Clark brought in a bill to allow optometrists to put drops in people's eyes for the sole purpose of allowing them to fit lenses better. There is nothing wrong with that, ought to be able to do that. That is their training, that is their occupation. But to be able to now treat, or to diagnose and treat diseases of the eye and to apply topical agents if the disease happens to be inflammation of the eye, goes far too far. It is too much, and even if the optometrist has specialized training in the area, that optometrist does not have the type of training that a medical doctor will have had because medical doctors, simply speaking, are given a lot more medical training on all conditions of the human body and on the eye to be able to treat eyes. This is a bad bill and I would like this bill to be returned to Select File to strike the enacting clause.

SPEAKER NICHOL: Senator Clark.

SENATOR CLARK: Mr. President, certainly I would oppose this but I guess whoever he went to didn't get his eyes clear open. In the first place, I don't know, I mean, heck, if all you are going to do is "refractorize" eyes, you don't have to go four years, for goodness sake, you can do that in a year's time. That isn't any big deal to do that. Optometrists are trained to diagnose. They have to diagnose by law in order to send people to ophthalmologists when it is beyond their training, and when you put drops in their eyes, it wasn't just to fit glasses better. It was to see the back of the eyes to see what disease was back there and they could send them on to an ophthalmologist. I don't know whether I am capable of doing this or not. I just got back from a pretty sad occasion but I was hoping this wouldn't happen to me, but I guess it has. That is the way legislation goes. You know we have given the doctors everything they want. All we are doing is the anterior portion of the eyes. Today's training in the optometric schools are certainly such that they know what they are doing. It is no big deal. They have signed it in three